



**Montgomery County, MD
Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
April 14th, 2010**

Welcome and Approval of March Meeting Summary Minutes:

Aaron Kaufman, Vice-Chair, convened the meeting. Due to time constraints, the approval of the March Meeting Summary Minutes was tabled until the May meeting.

Presentation: "FY11 Budget Issues Impacting People with Disabilities" ~ Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg

Councilmember Trachtenberg is also Chair of the Management & Fiscal Policy Committee and sits on the Health & Human Services (HHS) Committee. The County Executive sent the proposed FY11 Operating Budget to the County Council in March, 2010. At that time, the budget gap was \$779M. By the end of March the gap had increased to \$830M. As of April 13th, the budget gap is now close to \$1B. The County's yearly operating budget is \$400M. Half of that amount is appropriated for Montgomery County Public Schools. There is also an additional \$44M budget shortfall for FY10 that needs to be closed immediately. The County Executive will send his revised FY11 Operating Budget to the County Council next week, which will reflect further cuts. At this point the County cannot sustain the current community programming. The County has to look at long-term restructuring solutions. The reserve fund has been reduced from \$100M to \$5M, which has garnered the attention of bond rating agencies. If the County does not bring its spending in line with its revenues, the County's bond rating could be downgraded to an AA resulting in higher interest rates. Bonds provide funding for capital projects, school construction, and expansion of County facilities. Higher interest rates will deter such projects. The current fiscal and economic situation provides the County with an opportunity to restructure and to work smarter. The current rate of growth, at 14%, is not sustainable. At the last HHS Committee meeting, the members discussed Public Health Services such as minority health initiatives and Montgomery Cares, which serves over 20,000 uninsured residents. A few items were put on the reconciliation list. The Committee will be meeting to discuss Aging and Disability Services on April 15th. The County Executive and the County Council are committed to and understand the needs of vulnerable, such as in employment and housing opportunities. Councilmember Trachtenberg encouraged Commissioners to be advocates for vulnerable populations. As the County restructures and reformulates, there will be a greater need to focus on people in the community.

Councilmember Trachtenberg opened the floor to questions.

Jackie Simon, Commissioner, noted that in the current FY11 Operating Budget it is proposed for Angela Washington, Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Manager, to be moved from the Office of Human Resources to the Office of Human Rights. Jackie opposes the move and believes the position belongs in Human Resources. Councilmember Trachtenberg asked for Jackie to send her a letter from the Commission that defines the issue and states the reasons why this move should not take place. Jackie added that the County's "Safety Net" does not include persons with disabilities nor is it reflected in the FY11 Operating Budget. There is also an issue of duplication regarding group home inspections conducted by the County and the State. The process should be reexamined and streamlined. Councilmember Trachtenberg noted that the issue has already been raised at the County Council. Jackie discussed the issue of housing and special exceptions where the elderly and people with disabilities are housed together, but no one under 18 may occupy those premises. It should be available to anyone with a mobility impairment regardless of age. Councilmember Trachtenberg said the needs of those who are disabled have not been included during the decisions around land use. She has started to raise this issue

and encouraged Commissioners and residents to write the County Council about these types of issues as they help the conversations and change to take place.

Paul Meyer, Commissioner, noted that the White Flint Sector Plan will be a good opportunity for smart growth that will generate income to help defray capital gain losses and increase employment. Councilmember Trachtenberg said that mater plans are an integral part of how the County defines its vitality. The County has become more sensitive to individuals with disabilities. Councilmember Trachtenberg requested that Park & Planning submit an application to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for a Center of Disease Control and Prevention grant to conduct a health impact assessment for the Great Seneca Master Plan.

Charlie Crawford, Commissioner, suggested instituting revenue enhancements, such as a using a percentage of a tax on eye glasses. Councilmember Trachtenberg stated that such taxes are dictated by State law. The County has been trying to institute a gas tax increase for years to generate revenue to pay for highway and mass transit construction. The County Executive has proposed an energy tax of \$5 per month per household. There has been a soft agreement made between the County Executive and the County Council that this money will go towards restoring the reserve fund. In addition, the Council will be working with the Unions as employees have gone without a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) and step increases the last few years. A bill has been introduced to take a phantom COLA away as well, which the County has used as a base on future pension benefits. The County will have to reexamine compensation benefits of its employees. The furloughs are only a short-term solution.

Aaron Kaufman, Commissioner, supports the restoration of the County's 7% cut to the developmental disability supplement. Governor O'Malley has already made substantial cuts to this community and to the agencies that support individuals with developmental disabilities.

Sharon Freiman, Commissioner, suggested creating user fees for libraries and parks to generate revenue and also supports the increase of real estate taxes. Councilmember Trachtenberg said the challenges the County faces will not be closed by user fees. The County Council and the County Executive have made a commitment to not raise property taxes. The large gap will only be closed by abolishing or consolidating programs, such as merging Park and Planning with the Recreation Department.

Marcie Povitsky, Commissioner, asked if the County was going to continue funding long-term programs for illegal immigrants given the County's current fiscal constraints. She added that library services are important for persons with disabilities and hopes the County does not seek further cuts. Councilmember Trachtenberg does not think the illegal immigrant policy will change anytime soon. As for the libraries, they have already taken a significant cut and she thinks it is unlikely that the County Executive will propose additional cuts.

Additional questions can be e-mailed to Councilmember Trachtenberg at councilmember.trachtenberg@montgomerycountymd.gov or you can call 240-777-7965 (V).

Motion to Support the Billing of Ambulance Fees ~ Jackie Simon, Commissioner

Jackie Simon made a motion that the Commission support charging residents for an Emergency Medical Services Transport Fee. Aaron Kaufman, Vice-Chair, amended the motion to include advising the County Executive to educate persons with disabilities that if they do not have insurance or have limited income, they will not be charged for the service. Sandra Sermons, Commissioner, seconded the motion as amended. The motion was voted on and passed.

Presentation: "Benefits of Recreation and Stress Relief in Trying Times" ~ Mark Winans, Commissioner, and Tina Shubert, Recreation Specialist, Department of Recreation

Tina Shubert manages and supervises the County's exercise wellness programs that are offered throughout the County for residents and non-residents. During these trying times, individuals can become very stressed. Short-term side effects include sleeping disturbances, back, shoulder, and neck pain caused by tension, migraines, rashes, hives, heartburn and acid reflux. Long-term effects of stress

include depression, anxiety disorders, shortened oxygen supply which can lead to heart attacks, heart disease, high blood pressure which can lead to stroke, weakened immune system. There needs to be a balance in everyone's lives and the Rec Department can help create that balance. The Rec Department operates several Community Centers and Aquatic Centers. Exercise is one of the number one things to help reduce stress. The Rec Department also offers senior programs, group meetings, trips, dances, indoor walking programs, wellness programs, yoga, art classes, and more. The Rec Department received a grant along with 12 other agencies to create an audio device for people who have visual impairments to use an exercise room. The audio will individuals through the different exercise machines. They are also in the process of putting Braille labels on the exercise equipment. Tina asked Commissioners for their guidance.

Isabel A. Torres-Davis, Commissioner, asked if she can set up a time to swim laps as she has had issues in the past with swimming classes using accessible lap lanes. Mark Winans will look into this issue and in the meantime encouraged Isabel to visit the Germantown Aquatic Center as it is the newest facility with 20 lanes and she may run into fewer problems.

Kamran Rasul, Commissioner, reminded everyone that the Wheaton Wheelchair Tennis Club still meets on Fridays at the Wheaton Regional Park. For more info about the Club, call 301-905-3030 (V).

Update from the Chair and Vice Chair:

Aaron Kaufman, Vice-Chair, gave an update on the legislative session that concluded Monday evening. The Developmental Disabilities & Community Mental Health Services Rate Adjustments bill passed. The bill will require the Governor to appropriate funds for an annual inflationary increase for developmental disability community services and community mental health services. The increase must be equivalent to the inflationary increase provided to state agencies in the Governor's budget. The inflationary increase is capped at 4%. The Income Tax Check-Off for Developmental Disabilities bill was also passed. This bill establishes a check-off box on the Maryland income tax return form that allows people to contribute to the Developmental Disabilities Waiting List Equity Fund. The Waiting List Equity Fund is used to provide community services and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families. This new check-off is similar to what is currently on the form for the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund, the Cancer Research Fund, and the Fair Campaign Financing Fund. A bill also passed that requires school personnel to provide copies of any documents 5 days in advance of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or interdisciplinary team meeting at which parents and school staff will be making education decisions based on those documents. The Maryland Alcohol Tax bill did not pass.

Workgroup Announcements:

Seth Morgan, Commissioner, announced that the Health & Wellness Workgroup will meet next Wednesday, April 20th from 5pm to 6pm at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, in the 1st Floor Tan Conference Room. The Workgroup is working with the Commission on Health and the Commission on Aging on end-of-life issues.

Roundtable:

Daphne Pallozzi, Commissioner, invited Commissioners to the Kennedy Institutes 50th Anniversary Picnic Celebration on Saturday, April 17th. Kennedy Institute is expected to receive a proclamation from the DC Mayors Office as well as from County Executive Isiah Leggett. The celebration is free and will have activities for kids. Please RSVP at 202-281-2780 (V).

John Miers, Commissioner and Liaison to the Mental Health Advisory Board, is working with the Commission on Aging's Task Force for Aging Mental Health Issues. The Task Force is developing a pilot project that will provide training for nursing homes and assisted living facilities to help them recognize mental health problems and provide better care for their residents.

Lise Hamlin, Commissioner, noted that a bill passed requiring a place of public accommodation, on request, to keep closed captioning activated on a closed-captioning television receiver that is in use during

regular hours in a public area. Another bill was passed that alters the duties of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to include promoting the general welfare of individuals who are deaf-blind.

Steve Riley, Commissioner, noted that Aaron Kaufman will be receiving the Advocates in Disability Award From the HSC Foundation net month. The award recognizes a young person who has distinguished themselves through their professional or personal contributions in the area of disability.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm

Next Full Commission Meeting: Wednesday, May 12th, 2010 – EOB, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD - Lobby Auditorium, 6:30pm to 8:00pm

Health & Wellness Workgroup: Wednesday, May 19th, 2010 – 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD – 1st Floor Tan Conference Room, 5:00pm to 5:45pm

Steering Committee Meeting: Wednesday, May 19th, 2010 - 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD - 1st Floor Tan Conference Room, 5:45pm to 6:30pm

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Office Services Coordinator
Betsy Luecking, Disability Policy Specialist